

DANIEL ELLSBERG: THE CONSTRUCTION OF INSTABILITY

Edited transcript of talk to a seminar at the Institute  
of U.S. and Canada Studies, Moscow, July 1986

Is it possibly the case that I am sitting in the chair that President Nixon occupied on Monday?\*[LAUGHTER] I looked for a little plaque on it to commemorate the occasion. I heard that there was some playful talk here of possibly having me in the audience on Monday when he spoke. But that would have been rather cruel. I think that President Nixon's reaction to me is not unlike that of Edward Teller, on hearing that he was invited to speak before a committee of the California Legislature against the nuclear freeze, the same morning that I would be speaking to it in favor of the nuclear freeze. He protested very harshly to the counsel of the committee, as the counsel told me in calling me up. She reported to me that Teller had said that it was disgraceful they were asking me there. They should withdraw the invitation. He said, she told me, "After all, Daniel Ellsberg is a traitor, a liar, and a thief." And she asked, "What do you think about that?" And I said, "Well, nobody's perfect." [LAUGHTER]

But Nixon, unlike Teller, has paid a price for his imperfections, and humanly speaking I really think that it's just as well that he didn't know I would be following him here. He might feel that he was being pursued by a nemesis of some sort. And I know that feeling, because just last week at the Forum of Scientists Against Nuclear Testing, I had just arrived at the Central House of Tourists, feeling very jet-lagged, with no sleep, and I passed by a crowd of people in the Forum auditorium standing around a video screen. And suddenly I heard, not Russian, but a familiar voice droning on, and I saw, larger than life, the face of Cap Weinberger. And my feeling was . . . "Arrgh . . ." I covered my ears, my eyes, I felt, "It's not fair, I've come ten thousand miles, eleven time zones, I've gotten away from American newspapers and television and I can't get away from this man." And someone said, "Well, it's a global village." I said, "Yes, and he is the global village idiot." [LAUGHTER]

In fact, I believe, that whereas Secretary General Gorbachev is credited generally with the emphasis now on "the new way of thinking," in truth, Cap Weinberger deserves a great deal of credit for having stimulated that, for having awakened your scientists and your political people, your analysts and your military, to the realization that in the 1980s, "keeping up with the Jones'" as we say, doing everything that the United States does in the arms race, is not after all the best policy.

I think it has been the prospect of Star Wars which has really brought this realization to consciousness here, and has focussed attention on the problem of "stability" with what seems to me a new emphasis in Soviet thinking.

---

\* In introductory remarks, Sergei Plekhanov had mentioned that it was my publication of the Pentagon Papers "that started the confrontation between him and the person who was addressing us here on Monday, Richard Nixon."

100  
[ ]  
100  
100  
100  
100

100  
100  
100  
100  
100

100  
100  
100  
100  
100

100  
100  
100  
100  
100

100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100

100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100  
100



My impression from reading some books that have been given to me including this very excellent book by Radomir Bogdanov [The U.S. War Machine and Politics] is that perhaps for the last twenty years, since at least the regime of Leonid Brezhnev and perhaps a bit before that, the basis of Soviet decision-making in the arms race could be simplified or paraphrased as being that "parity (at high levels of arms) equals deterrence equals stability."

Perhaps there was a realization among some that parity was not strictly necessary for deterrence. In other words that it might lead one into spending more than you absolutely had to for stable deterrence. But it was accepted that it was, in any case, sufficient for stability, that it assured stability, especially when one had achieved the fairly high levels of forces that we now have. And it is agreed in these writings that stability now exists and has existed for some time, close to twenty years.

Now there is a realization that stability is threatened, looking toward the future, by the U.S. plans for Star Wars. And I want to extend that conclusion a little backwards in time, which will in some ways open up some new opportunities, I think, for Soviet negotiating and Soviet decisions.

Let me define "stability" in a simplified way: A situation in which neither side has a significant incentive, under any circumstances whatever, to initiate a major strategic strike against the homeland of the other. Obviously this does not preclude the act of a madman of some sort, but it is a situation in which only a madman would choose to initiate strategic nuclear war. A deliberate first strike, in such a context of stability, would take a leader mad in a way we have, in fact, not seen on either side--mad in a way that Hitler might have been, or Idi Amin--in any case an unusual clinical state for a leader of a great power.

I think people believe that is the situation that exists today, has existed for a full generation, and would exist in the future in the absence of Star Wars; and I want to suggest that's wrong. The real situation, I believe, is more ominous, more urgent than that implies, even apart from Star Wars.

But let me again relate this to parity. I've said that in the past it has been believed here that parity was sufficient for stability. For a considerable period that was true. The period I have in mind is roughly the fifteen years from the introduction of hardened silos for land-based missiles--1962, in the U.S., about 1964 in the S.U.--till the deployment of accurate, silo-busting warheads (1977, in the U.S., with the Soviets testing comparable warheads the same year).

Of course, over a long period like that, habits of mind develop and rules of thumb, policy-making criteria are institutionalized in ways that are hard to change, and take some time to change even when they are



no longer appropriate. My point is that parity is no longer sufficient for stability. Quite the contrary. I'm going to suggest that the pursuit of parity--by which I don't mean necessarily matching weapon for weapon, but a general attitude that one should possess the same functional capabilities as the other side, and a general equality of level, even with some asymmetries--I'm going to suggest that not only is that not sufficient, does not guarantee stability, but that indeed it has guaranteed instability. It has led directly into a situation of instability.

That possibility as a prospect for the future seems to me quite adequately appreciated and well analyzed by the Committee of Soviet Scientists Against Nuclear War, in their analysis of Star Wars. And by the way, I have the impression that some of these scientists first came to military matters in connection with Star Wars, and their analysis so far is applied almost entirely to S.D.I. But they have of course observed that the possession of imperfect defensive forces--not totally ineffective, but imperfect defensive forces, the only kind that can really be constructed--on both sides does create a situation of instability.

It would still be true, because of the imperfection of those forces, that a side striking first would face a very high likelihood of vast destruction, catastrophic by any historic standards. But military men are used to imagining different orders of catastrophe and distinguishing between them. And most of them can imagine a catastrophe significantly worse, even, than the destruction caused by enemy warheads that penetrated one's defenses, after being greatly reduced in numbers by one's counterforce preemptive first strike and by the defenses.

As the scientists have pointed out, it could be within the imagination of military men and political leaders of the kind we have seen on either side--no more mad than that, let's say--to suppose that in a crisis situation where both sides had defenses, the opposing side might be contemplating a first disarming strike, perhaps in the mistaken belief that it was about to suffer a first strike if it waited. And in that situation it might be worth preempting, "striking second first," as some people have put that. Getting in the first blow, not with much hope of avoiding terrible damage, but with the hope of avoiding the still worse damage that would be associated with striking second.

In other words, it has been noticed in connection with S.D.I. that even a world with enormous numbers of offensive weapons on both sides, a world in which no slightly rational person could imagine launching a nuclear war without grave risk, could still be a world in which a "normal" political or military leader could under some circumstances press the button and launch his forces. And those circumstances are precisely the circumstances in which he has reason to fear, and does fear, that otherwise, if he waits, his country might be struck first.



Now, in such circumstances there is even a further incentive to automate that process, coupling the determination to launch missiles to one's warning system. You may well not be able to wait in such a world for any human to make the decision, to launch either "pop-up" defenses or counterforce weapons. So we hear of the idea of automated launch-on-warning systems. We hear it from the Soviet Union as well as from the U.S.

By ordinary standards, of let's say 10 or 20 years ago, that very thought would have seemed the essence of madness, given the risks of false alarm that are involved in it. But in fact, as we know, the Soviet Union is correct in saying the U.S. might be compelling them to construct such a situation for fear of even a worse situation, of being disarmed, of suffering the total damage involved in postponing their response to a first strike. And the U.S. says the same. This could lead to the situation implied in a movie preview I saw last night, "Notes From a Dead Man." The actors are Russian, but it is meant to suggest possibly being in some other country--the nationality is actually uncertain--and one message is that there is more than one country in which the premise of the movie could have applied. And that premise is a computer error which launches the forces, with a subsequent human failure to countermand the error in time.

Now, the computer error, as we have seen already in American experience, could take at least two forms. It could be the failure of an automated system, with no human intervention, if such a system existed. Or it could be a computer error which produced false warnings or perhaps electronic "shadows" which produced false warnings, that led a human to decide, wrongly, that the time had come to take a human decision and to launch the forces.

Computers can fail, and radar and infrared warning systems can produce false positives, at any time. That has been possible for the last 20 to 30 years, and it frequently has happened in fact. But when it has happened, it has not led to a launch. And there's been a reason for that.

It happened as early as 1960 and even earlier in the United States. (Acheson gives in his memoirs an account of a false alert in 1950!) I don't know about here. But in each of those cases the U.S. waited to see what was happening, in the assurance that the information must be false, that there must be a failure in the system: Because the Soviet Union couldn't be attacking.

One major false alarm of which I know showed many Soviet missiles coming toward the U.S. on the very day that our ballistic missile early warning system was first turned on. It was the immediate reaction of the warning system in 1960. But the U.S. generals knew that the Soviets did not have that many missiles. Although the U.S. had what could be



called first strike forces, even very good first strike forces at that time, they did not have an ability to strike with total impunity. The Soviets had some retaliatory power. But it was so small--the Soviets had essentially no first strike, disarming capability--that the U.S. had no basis for fearing that they were about to be attacked.

That was a situation of great asymmetry, not parity, but it was quite stable in fact. Even though the forces of those days on both sides were vulnerable--both the bombers and the missiles were "soft," and could have been destroyed by fairly inaccurate warheads--the fact that the Soviets posed almost no first strike threat protected them, and the U.S., from a U.S. attack based on a false warning in 1960 and at other times.

There came to be another basis for stability. In the late '60s, both sides had large numbers of hardened missiles. The accuracy of those missiles on both sides was too small to provide a very high kill probability against the silos of the other. As accuracy increased, so did hardening. Moreover, the U.S. had many submarines, and the Soviets had begun to have some submarines. In this situation again there was essentially no incentive for either side to strike first. Had they struck first under any circumstances--a war in Europe, a war in the Middle East, whatever--they would have been sure to suffer damage far in excess of the stakes at issue.

There was still no likelihood that either would imagine, falsely, that the other side was striking first, for the reasons I've given, even in a crisis and even if there were false or ambiguous electronic indications of an attack. There was essentially no incentive for either to preempt. Neither side could lessen its damage by striking first. There was no advantage in striking first over striking second, because it could not destroy the retaliatory forces of the other side, or even significantly reduce them.

Therefore, no matter what the circumstances or what any "signals" suggested, it was highly implausible that the opponent could be considering or launching a first strike.

Moreover, even if somehow one side did conclude that the other side was striking, it still had no incentive to attempt to preempt because, as I say, they couldn't limit damage to themselves by moving first. There is one important exception to this: the command and control system of both sides have always been vulnerable and probably will always be vulnerable. Therefore, there has always been some basis for hope that if you struck the command and control of the other side fast you might paralyze its response. But you might not, because, of course, that response could have been delegated, leading eventually to an uncoordinated but totally devastating response by enemy weapons most of which would have survived.

Thus, the situation was very stable. Notice that this stability in no way really depended on "parity," on numerical equality on either



side. If two sides have large but very unequal forces, but each of them is invulnerable to the other--for example, one side has 50 submarines at sea, which cannot be attacked by the other, while the other side has 200 submarines at sea which cannot be attacked--the situation is nevertheless stable. There is no incentive to strike first, even to preempt. That's what I mean when I say parity is not necessary for stability.

Imagine, on the other hand, that both sides have equal numbers of forces which are soft, vulnerable to the other side. Each has hundreds of missiles, the same number, all of these, however, soft, concentrated and highly vulnerable along with their command and control. That would be parity, but an extremely dangerous situation of instability. In fact it's the situation the U.S. imagined existed in the period of the supposed missile gap of '59, '60. And that gave rise then to fearful films like, "On the Beach," and "Dr. Strangelove," exactly like, "Notes From a Dead Man" this year.

Now why has there been this hiatus between those two popularizations of the problem? In the first instance, the fears turned out to be illusory--not because the analysis was wrong, not because the existence of two vulnerable forces was not dangerous, but because two sizeable vulnerable forces did not exist. There was only one sizeable vulnerable force--the United States'--with the Soviets having such a small force that, though vulnerable, it posed no real threat.

I wonder how many people in this room know actually how many missiles the Soviets had in 1960, or '61, the year of the Berlin Crisis? The number was four. I have revealed this number--a highly classified number in America--publicly over the years. It now is in the literature, thanks to my introducing it, because I wanted to make it clear to people how it was we had survived the nuclear era this long. It was not because the notion of instability was valid. The fact is, I think the analysis was and is sound and deserves to be paid attention to, and it needs to be rediscovered.

Why then is "On the Beach," in the form of "Notes From a Dead Man," suddenly reappearing? And from all places, from the home of Marxism in the world: where notions of an end to history are not what you learn, I presume, in gradeschool. The answer is, because a situation is coming into being, or could come into being with Star Wars in particular, where the situation we feared prematurely in the early '60s, a situation indeed of parity--the parity of imperfect first strike forces--does threaten the possibility of automated or human launch on warning, thus of launch by false alarm. Perhaps deliberate human launch in fear that the other side is attacking, fear based on the fact that the other side may, incorrectly, fear that one is oneself attacking, because each side has both the capability to do it, and the possible incentive in terms of expectations, reasonable as well as unreasonable fears.

Let me pursue this a little more schematically and then apply



this to specific decisions we're facing. The salience of the following points has especially come to me in these last ten days in the Soviet Union. And I don't think they are too familiar.

A "perfect" first-strike force, one that guaranteed total disarming, one that perhaps President Reagan, and only President Reagan, could imagine in existence, would be destabilizing even if only one side had it. They could feel that they could, in case of a local crisis, actually use that force and get away scot-free. Everyone else knows that that is quite infeasible. It is hard even to believe that your opponent might imagine that he has such a force, unless the opponent is President Reagan or Edward Teller, I have to say. But that is not the only destabilizing situation.

Imperfection in the defenses, or in the counterforce offenses, is not a guarantee of stability. I know I'm repeating myself here, but I want to make it clear. However, a single imperfect force by itself is not very destabilizing, so long as the other side has almost no preemptive damage-limiting capability at all. (This was pretty much the actual situation, as I've already noted, in the early Sixties.) It would lead to a strike if the side possessing that force believed itself to be about to be struck. But since it has no reason to fear that, it is not likely to use its capability, even to win a limited war.

But the combination of two imperfect damage-limiting forces creates serious instability, the risk that they will explode. It's like the two elements of binary nerve gas, each of which is individually safe, but when mixed provides nerve gas. Or a better analogy would be to two stable elements which when mixed provide an unstable explosive compound.

These are the only kinds of disarming forces that really can be created in the world--imperfect disarming forces. With these it takes two sides to create the instability. To say that is to say that it takes, in effect, participation of both nuclear major powers to create that danger in the world. One power does not do it by itself. It has to be produced by what could be called collaboration, though perhaps it's an inadvertant collaboration. But definitely joint participation. And that is what has occurred.<sup>1</sup>

It took two to create this situation. The U.S. led the way in the producing such forces. The Soviets followed. And the result is instability, now with worse to come, even before Star Wars can be deployed.

Star Wars doesn't yet exist even in imperfect form. And the Soviets may well--on the basis of the new way of thinking--successfully avert producing their own. They may avoid going in that same direction. But the problem is that the analysis which demonstrates the danger of Star Wars applies also to forces that already exist--offensive forces. I'm saying that the dangers of instability that have been seen by the Scientists' Committee did not begin with Cap Weinberger, they do not begin

<sup>1</sup> Now each side has some significant capability to limit the destructive force opposing it, by striking first preemptively; and, in some crisis circumstances, the incentive to use this ability, for fear that otherwise it may be struck first.



with Star Wars. They begin much earlier with developments in offensive weapons in the mid-'70s, they exist today and they're about to get worse. The problem with stability or instability, I'm saying, will exist even if Star Wars is successfully averted.

I'm suggesting that the very good Soviet analysis of the dangers of Star Wars should now be brought backwards into the existing situation, and the previous situation concerning offensive weapons on both sides, in a way that I have not yet actually heard done or focused on by Soviet scientists and analysts. Of course, I can well believe that there have already been discussions of such things among you. But I can report that I have now seen some quite recent Soviet writings that do not reveal to me this awareness. So at least as a matter of emphasis I think I do have a message here which may contribute something.

Some of you will know immediately to what I'm referring and perhaps others not. I have described the situation of the late '60s and early '70s in which there was a parity of numbers and in which neither side could attack the other side's forces successfully. I want to emphasize again, in my opinion, the parity of numbers had little to do with the stability. You could say that it brought stability if you like, it was sufficient, but it was not necessary. And a focus on numbers is an illusion which leads you astray, in my opinion.

That applies to negotiations as well. To agree with President Reagan, or for that matter, Carter, that the appropriate focus of negotiations is numbers, numbers of launchers, numbers of warheads, rather than characteristics, types of weapons, deployment characteristics; I believe that that has been a trap for the world. And it should be changed in the Soviets' arms control proposals.

The situation today is still one of parity, but also of instability, with the prospect of increasing instability. I'm not, of course, saying that the two sides moved into this situation at the same pace. On the contrary, as is so frequently pointed out by Soviet officials, the U.S. has led, initiating nearly every one of the measures that has reduced stability. And the Soviets, as they put it, have "only responded." But the Soviets do have responsibility, if not for initiating the moves, for the character of their response. And that response has been, on the whole, pretty much to duplicate the functional characteristics of the U.S. forces, so far as possible.

There are asymmetries in your basing situation with respect to submarines, with respect to your land mass and so forth, which of course produce asymmetries in the posture. But in terms of technical capability, the Soviets have said, in effect, "We will show that we can do any technical thing the other side can, in fact by doing it." If one side, then, the U.S. leading the dance, produces disarming, accurate, vulnerable first-strike forces, and the Soviets follow a different principle--the principle of doing whatever the U.S. does--the result, eventually, is



that the Soviets too have disarming, vulnerable, accurate first-strike forces. They have, in pursuit of deterrence based on parity, followed the U.S. into a trap. A trap not only for Soviets, not only for the U.S., but a trap for the whole world.

This situation has taken many years to produce. A number of necessary elements had to come in sequence to create this dangerous situation. The first, as you know, was MIRVing. But by itself, that was not enough. So long as the MIRV warheads were inaccurate, they did not change the basic character of the situation. By 1974-75, the U.S. had again a situation where it had twice as many strategic warheads as the Soviets, not parity. So what? It brought certain disadvantages for you, perhaps, in terms of prestige and other perceptions. But when it comes to incentives to strike first in a crisis: no real change. Then the Soviets likewise MIRVed, to return closer to numerical parity. Again, so far, no basic change in the situation: still stability. But the Soviets did this instead of pressing for a mutual ban on further MIRV flight testing, which would have prevented increased accuracy.

Then the U.S. took a fatal step of improving the accuracy of its MIRVed missiles. I can give that a point in time. The Minuteman III began to be introduced, I believe, in around '75 or so. But the advanced Minuteman III with a MARK 12A warhead and the NS20 guidance system was not deployed until 1977, nine years ago. This was the first weapon capable of a high kill-probability against a highly hardened missile site. Oddly, or perhaps not, Weinberger and Reagan deny that the U.S. initiated this. And I'm interested to see that the Soviets have never really made a point of refuting that lie. The U.S. Government likes to say that the first silo-busting capability was the SS-18, and that's why we need the MX, as an imitative response. But in fact, neither government has made the public very aware of the fact it really started with the MARK 12A warhead. The Minuteman missiles now became more accurate, at least for the purpose of limiting damage if the war actually occurs. Still there is not a basic change in stability. It by no means gave the U.S. a full first strike capability, even on paper, because the Minuteman could only cover a fraction of the Soviet missiles; and meanwhile there is still no basis for fearing a Soviet first strike, so no incentive in a crisis to preempt it.

Next step--and here's where I say things began to get fatal--the Soviets simply demonstrate that their engineers can produce accuracy as well as the Americans. "You can do it, we can do it." The SS-18, I believe, had come in around '75, is that correct? But as I understand it the increased accuracy is not tested till '77. And those very tests immediately provide the stimulus for what has been called arms race instability. Again, the Soviets rejected the alternative of pressing for a ban on MIRV flight testing, which would have prevented the MX and D5.

The testing of the RV with improved guidance, what the U.S. calls the SS-18, Mod-4, had the immediate effect, long before deployment, of supporting the position of Team B under Ford, which influenced negotiations from then on; <sup>and</sup> stimulating the programs for the MX, for the Trident II, <sup>(D5)</sup> for Cruise missiles to provide mobility. The effects on the general arms race of these Soviet tests were terrible. They lowered the security



certainly

of the Soviet Union. I'm not going to say these measures would not have happened had the Soviets not done those tests, but there's no question from the U.S. point of view that the testing immediately gave an immense boost to those programs.

That is not to say that these measures I've spoken of, the MX, and the Trident II in particular, are appropriate responses to the Mod-4 of the SS-18, if your goal were stability. They were, nevertheless, predictable responses, and particularly for a reason that I hope we have time to discuss later--the U.S. does not seek strategic stability, in my opinion. So from the U.S. point of view these were appropriate responses.

OK, the next step is, the SS-18 Mod-4 is deployed, as recently as '81. That's only under President Reagan. Now for the first time in history each side has a significant, though not complete, power to disarm the other. That's what we feared was the case in 1960, but it has never happened before. It is the first time that has come into being, and that is as recently as this Reagan Administration, which is to say as recently as the youngest of you started working on this problem.

But that's not the end of it. It still is the case that each side has only a limited ability to disarm the other. Neither can, yet, even target the majority of the other's offensive forces. But, as you know, the U.S. is working on the MX--about to deploy this year--and the Trident II or D-5 missile which will have the ability to destroy Soviet silos. The D-5 will only be deployed in '89. Some time in the early '90s, '93, '94, the U.S., for the first time, will have an ability to target all the Soviet missiles, a very major disarming capability, though still imperfect in terms of reliability. This will be combined with a quite large anti-submarine warfare capability, which the Soviets, I would say fortunately, don't have. Fortunately not just for the U.S., fortunately, as you'll understand, for the Soviet Union. I would be desperately concerned for the future of humanity if Soviet scientists ingeniously managed to discover a way to threaten the U.S. submarine force. And I say that not only as an American, but as a human. You can see it follows from my analysis here.

Stability does not require inferiority of numbers of anything else. But it does require avoiding certain types of capability. You could have larger numbers, of many things. You could have more ingenious and advanced properties in other respects, but if you want stability, if you want secure deterrence, you must avoid threatening the retaliatory forces of the other side to a major degree.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the aim by the military on both sides to "lessen damage," if a war should actually occur, has the almost unavoidable property of increasing the threat to the other side's retaliatory forces, and thus making general war more likely in the event of a limited war or crisis.

In my opinion, the Soviets and the world and the U.S. have an

<sup>2</sup>And all the more so if your opponent already has made this mistake of threatening your own forces!



enormous incentive to avoid the emergence of the Trident II and the full deployment of the MX in numbers greater than Congress has yet authorized. I desperately do not want my country to have the capability it is now seeking and is about to get, of a full-scale threat against the entire retaliatory forces of the Soviet Union. And I say this, of course, not only in the Soviet Union, I say this in the U.S., and with no apologies, as a patriotic American. I say again and again to Americans, "I do not want this country to have that offensive capability against the Soviet Union."

It's a point that can be explained, but needs explaining. It's not familiar to the American public. And I have to say, the Soviets, in their public positions, in their discussions, have not made it familiar. On the whole, they have so emphasized parity, so emphasized numbers, even in their negotiating proposals, that they have not educated the world, or perhaps themselves, to the reality that numbers are not the critical element. Or that even large reductions in numbers may not compensate for the creation of even small forces that have this property.

I repeat again, both sides are producing such forces, and they would not be so dangerous unless both sides were doing it. To say that, by the way, is to show a way out of the trap. If it took the collaboration of both sides, actively and simultaneously, to begin to move out of the trap, I would tend to despair. Because, I believe, Richard Perle, Cap Weinberger, and certain strategic analysts, and President Reagan, want to be in the trap. I haven't explained that yet, but they want the emerging situation. They choose it. Yet the Soviets have the ability unilaterally to take initiatives that would increase the chances of averting these increased dangers, and reducing the present risks.

The point above is hard to imagine, hard to believe, in this country and in my country both, and in fact it's based in part on information that has only recently become available. I'm saying that the U.S. chose this instability deliberately. Which is to say: Do not count on the U.S. to initiate steps to alleviate it. Russians ask, "Why should we lead the way? Why should we take initiatives? We both have this problem." The answer really is, the U.S., at least in the present administration, is not going to lead the way, because they do not believe in getting out of this trap. They chose to be in it. Let me demonstrate that.

I said that the stability problem began to emerge with the introduction of MIRVs, although not seriously for another decade, until both sides had accurate MIRV forces. Now that we both have those, the situation is apparent, at least to some people. Henry Kissinger has made it public, and even has associated himself now with a proposal to de-MIRV, which was really initiated by Albert Gore, Senator Gore. I recommend to you his initial analysis and the work of his aide, Leon Furth, an excellent analyst. Well, this analysis was done in the early '80s, and Kissinger is widely quoted, you know, as saying, "I wish I had thought through earlier the



implications of a MIRVed world." That suggests a past decision process that is very plausible. Namely, that both sides must have wandered into this instability trap, this quagmire, inadvertently, as often happens in human affairs. Surely no one could have sought it.

I want to refute that, not to simply point fingers and condemn, but to understand the nature of the situation. There are, in fact, incentives at work, in the U.S. in particular, which encouraged the emergence of this situation. When Henry Kissinger says, "I wish I had been told. I wish I had thought it through," that sounds like self-critical, self-deprecating humor, for which Kissinger is famous. In fact, what it is is a self-serving lie, for which Kissinger is also famous. Kissinger did have precise predictions and analysis of these implications as early as 1969, in his first months in office.

Consultants directly to Kissinger, like George Rathjens and Jack Ruina, wrote him analyses at that time of amazing prescience, to the following effect: "The introduction of MIRV will give Americans an initial numerical advantage, which will not change anything strategically. There will be a second phase in which the Soviets gain a numerical advantage, because of their heavier missiles. They can put more MIRVs on. That too will not really change anything except image and numbers. There will be a third phase,"--and they gave Kissinger dates to these phases which were remarkably accurate, and not refuted by anyone--"There will be a third phase in which numbers will be rather equivalent, but the U.S. will have a functional capability to destroy 75% of Soviet warheads, and the Soviets will have the capability to destroy something like 25% of U.S. warheads." I.e., each would be able to target all and to destroy most of the fixed land-based forces of the other.

Now that gives a functional, numerical advantage, you might say, to the U.S. but, as Ruina and Rathjens pointed out, the situation raises a catastrophic danger for both sides, for the reasons I've given. In other words, that's an advantage the U.S. should not want to have. So Rathjens and Ruina strongly recommended a ban on MIRV testing--easily verifiable--and on MIRV deployment. Not that the MIRVs themselves were so dangerous, but the combination that would later come, of accurate MIRVs on both sides, would be dangerous to both.

There was nothing wrong with that analysis. It was amazingly farsighted. It's revealed in Sy Herish's book on Kissinger, "The Price of Power." And I've read their actual memo, which is amazingly good. But Nixon and Kissinger rejected their recommendation to attempt to ban MIRV testing or deployment on both sides. Thus the U.S., under Kissinger and Nixon, chose that historic evolution, the trajectory Kissinger's consultants predicted, of which the third phase is now approaching. And the Soviet Union, predictably, played its part, which was necessary to the dangerous outcome.

When I get to this point in the argument, as I have to several



Soviet analysts, the question then always is, "But why? Why would they?" Well, I can't take the time here for a full discussion of that, but let me sketch it out very quickly. For a little further discussion of what I'm saying I refer you to several papers and interviews I'm leaving here, including my preface to Protest and Survive, "Call to Mutiny."

Briefly, the U.S. strategy since 1945 has depended on a kind of capability which the Soviets have eventually acquired, to some degree, but have never, in my view, depended on. I believe the Soviets could forego it without major change in their strategic objectives. But it's very hard for the U.S. to forego it without changing its whole calculus of its vital interests in the world, or its sphere of influence. That is the capability, credibly, to threaten to initiate nuclear war.

The U.S. has, in fact, made such threats many more times than U.S. citizens are aware. And probably more than many of you are aware. (In "Call to Munity" I give some unclassified references that have appeared by now.) In Indochina, in Korea, against the Chinese Communists, and even in the Middle East, as well in Europe each U.S. President, with the possible exception of Ford, has, in fact directed, in an on-going crisis, plans and preparations for the possible imminent use of nuclear weapons. He has not done so, in any case, to win in a dramatic way. To that extent they have been cautious, responsible. Each one has done that only at a point where it has seemed necessary to avoid a tactical defeat, or a prolonged, costly stalemate. And every time that such a thing impended, the U.S. President has, in fact, usually secretly from the American public though not from our adversaries, considered, and in most cases threatened the use of nuclear weapons. To say that is to say the U.S. has used nuclear weapons, often since Hiroshima: in the way that a gun is used when it is pointed at someone's head in a direct confrontation, whether or not the trigger is pulled. Whereas to say, as many scientists now say in the new way of thinking, that nuclear weapons can have no use other than to deter their use against us, is in my opinion, misleading: at least to the extent it purports to reflect the thinking of American leaders and their understanding of their historical practice and experience. New thinking can be in error, and you have to look critically at new thinking as at old. And I would question that particular element of new thinking: not because it doesn't have some wisdom, it does. But because it's misleading about the incentive in the minds of military and political rulers.

In the U.S., certainly, leaders have thought that weapons had other uses than deterring nuclear attack. Those uses are not, on the whole, in a disarming, preventive war, but the use or threatened use of tactical nuclear weapons to prevent the surrounding or defeat of an American or allied, expeditionary force, as at Dien Bien Phu, as at Khe Sanh, as in the Quemoy Crises, as in Berlin, and in various other places. Or the threatened use to end favorably a stalemated war, as in Korea or Vietnam.

The U.S. conception of its sphere of influence or interests, is unprecedentedly global, as you know. It extends essentially to the borders of Soviet and Warsaw Pact military presence, around the world. No empire



has ever aspired to such a wide spread sphere. And the U.S. resources have never been thought of as being adequate to police that sphere, without nuclear weapons. What allows the U.S. to imagine, or to aspire to such wide-spread influence in the world, since '45, was of course, initially a monopoly of nuclear weapons. If our expeditionary forces were threatened, whether in Europe or in the Middle East or elsewhere, they could be backed-up by initiating nuclear warfare, not only in NATO but elsewhere. That made it possible to think that we could police events so far away.

In 1949 we lost that monopoly. But, Paul Nitze immediately pointed out to Dean Acheson, nuclear monopoly was not essential to maintaining this sphere; nuclear superiority was.

To compensate for conventional inferiority at various parts of this global periphery, the U.S. needed the credible threat of nuclear first-use, and for that credibility superiority was a substitute for monopoly, second-best but potentially adequate. Thus the U.S. needed superiority, as much and for as long as possible. Nuclear superiority helps in the following way. The problem is to make first-use credible, when the Soviet Union, which is generally the ally of our adversary--sometimes the immediate adversary, as in Berlin, but generally the ally, as in Korea, earlier in China, and elsewhere--could retaliate. To make it credible that you would use nuclear weapons--small nuclear weapons, short-range--against an ally of the Soviet Union, you have to have some plausible basis for believing that the Soviets will not reply, will not "extend a nuclear umbrella" over their ally. Why wouldn't they? The answer can only be that the Soviets would fear that if they did so, we would escalate, we would hit harder. And if they replied in kind to that, we might or would go all the way to disarm them. Thus, Nitze, wrote in 1956, superiority at this highest level would strengthen, indeed was virtually necessary to, the credibility of the threats at the lower levels.

All this may sound very theoretical and abstract. But it is a theory with some plausibility, and more importantly it has been acted on, both in the weapons we've acquired, and in the use of threats. And it has had some success. It was not at all without cost for Khrushchev to deny a nuclear umbrella to the Chinese in the heat of the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1958. But at a time when he had no ICBMs at all, he did refuse to assure the Chinese that he would reply to the use of nuclear weapons. As I understand it, that was not only a factor in resolving the crisis in favor of Chiang, but figured in the Chinese-Soviet split. I could give other examples, where U.S. Presidents were led to believe that their superiority had been effective, and was worth continuing.

For precisely those reasons, presumably, Brezhnev, and even Khrushchev in his last years, set out to take away the credibility of those threats by removing that American superiority. Parity seemed to be the answer.

By the same token, new American efforts to "modernize" have



been seen in the following paradigm over here, the following inference: "America is not accepting parity. They must be trying to achieve superiority." Right? You've heard that. It's said here all the time, including recently. I think you may be misled. Most Americans, even those high in the Reagan Administration, know very well, since the Brezhnev period, that the Soviets will not allow U.S. superiority to emerge. So what are they doing?

U.S. forces are evolving within the context of parity; but parity of a new kind, unstable parity. It turns out that there is a way of making it somewhat credible, even in a world of large forces on both sides, even in a world without superiority, that the U.S. might carry out a threat to escalate to a first strike if the Soviets retaliated to U.S. first-use against a Soviet ally. You don't absolutely need superiority: you need instability.

You need a situation of strategic postures on both sides in which there may be parity, but in which you can say: "If this crisis gets too hot, the world may blow up. So don't let it get too hot . . . We, in fact, may have to use nuclear weapons against your friends, if they threaten our forces. You should try not to let that arise, but if it does, don't retaliate in kind."

The U.S., in sum, has seen itself as having an urgent need to convince the Soviets that they must not retaliate in kind to a U.S. tactical first-use, outside Soviet borders, or against Soviet clients or allies. How to do that? By saying, "The world is such that if you retaliate, even at the same local level, the whole thing may blow. Because it's unstable. In those circumstances, we may fear you will eventually strike us first (to preempt our possible attack). So we may preempt!"

The U.S. couldn't produce that instability by itself. Had the Soviets chosen not to imitate the particular capability of threatening opposing land based forces, there would not be that instability. And I then would say the U.S. threat of first-use would be incredible. Americans would have no incentive whatever to launch those strategic forces, because we would have no basis for fearing that we were about to be struck. But the Soviets "obligingly," in the pursuit of parity--not so much with the deployment of the SS-18, in '75, but with the improvement in accuracy of the SS-18 in 1977-81--provided Reagan with what he needed to make that first-strike threat continue to be credible, as back-up to threats of local, tactical first-use. And thus, we have the unstable world of today.

And it's getting worse, of course. It will get much worse with the Trident II. I have the impression that the Soviets have not protested as much about Trident II as they did about Pershing II, which has similar implications, for several reasons. Trident II is coming later in time. Also, it seems less easy to stop it in Congress; that is true. Third, perhaps there is a feeling that you can compensate for the threat of the Trident II by building your own mobile forces: the SS-24, the SS-25, the Typhoon, and so forth, that the Trident cannot reach. That does compensate to some degree, but I want to suggest to you that it is true in this case



what your scientists have said about SDI. They concluded that "Even though, we, the Soviets, will do our best to counteract the instability introduced by U.S. Star Wars defenses, we will not be able fully to compensate. We will not get back to the world before SDI. There will be an inevitable decrease in stability." I think that's correct. And the same is true on the offensive side. Even with SS-24, even with SS-25, the existence of the D-5 will make the world less safe than it was before. Because there will still remain those vulnerabilities on both sides, the ability and the temptation to target fixed land-based forces. There will still remain generals who would say, "Even though, in this crisis, we cannot get everything, let us get first what we can. Let us destroy what we can, before it is launched against us."

Of course, the very phrase, "new way of thinking", suggests that an old way may have involved some error. So I think I'm not being too provocative if I say here that it is time to notice that some errors were made on the Soviet side, not only on the U.S. side. Specifically, I will say, just in my own opinion, flatly, that the improvement in accuracy in the SS-18 whatever advantages it may have promised in the way of technical prestige or damage-limiting in a war, was a strategic blunder of immense significance. Not only in causing the U.S. to provide more forces, but in increasing actual Soviet risk in a crisis. I believe that it was an error to improve that accuracy rather than to press for a ban on mutual flight testing and meanwhile, to forego SS-18 flight tests for improved accuracy.

#### missiles

Of course, now you can't just make <sup>^</sup> inaccurate, because that can't be done convincingly. But the security of the Soviet Union in future crises could be made greater than it is, or will be soon, by simply destroying the SS-18. If you don't see that, that you're more secure without the improved-accuracy SS-18 than you are with it, then you haven't followed or accepted the reasoning I've presented. I'm not saying, though, that unilateral destruction is your best approach.

The SS-18, and SS-24 for that matter, could better be used as true bargaining chips to advance our mutual security. What we want is a world that moves away from the direction in which it is moving. I don't think, by the way, that Reagan can be moved in this new direction. Being old has some disadvantages, and inflexibility of thinking is one of them. I don't really think he will be taught a new way of thinking in the next year and a half. Fortunately, we do have another branch of government which is capable of affecting our deployments and our testing--with difficulty, improbably, reluctantly--and that's Congress. But there is some precedent, and it can be done. Congress ended the Vietnam War in a way the Vietnamese could not end it. They could not stop our bombers from flying. And no President wanted to stop those bombers from flying. Only Congress, under pressure from the public, decided to stop the bombers from flying. Congress was able to stop them, and Congress did do that, and that made the war endable. That was the first precedent for what I am suggesting, but it is a major precedent of success.

In that case, it was an American initiative. But that American



initiative responded to years and years of body bags. And body bags that were given more prominence on our television than your body bags in Afghanistan are given on your television. The urgency of the situation was very great, and I don't think will be reproduced in this arms race situation. So what is necessary here for Congress to do in the arms race what it did in Vietnam, is for the Soviet Union to change the context in which Congress votes. I'm saying the focus is Congress, not the President. And that will be true under a new President, even though he will not be like Reagan, I'm sure, whoever he is.

It was necessary for the Soviet Union to take, not just proposals, but actions, that change the context of decision. And last August, 1985, the Soviet Union did that. I want to praise that action strongly. I think it is the most significant action towards stability, and toward peace, that either side has taken in the entire arms race. Especially the willingness to extend the moratorium in a situation where the American President was being totally unresponsive. I didn't expect that action from the Soviet Union. I was surprised, and I'm overjoyed to see the ability to act on the new way of thinking, to show, not only a new way of thinking, and a new way of proposing, but a new way of acting. I want to emphasize the difference between that action and earlier declarations: like, for example the no-first-use-declaration, good as that was.

This new way of acting, actually ceasing to test, unilaterally, has changed the situation to the point where Congress is now seriously contemplating cutting off the funds. The House of Representatives is moving toward cutting off the funds. [Within one month of this talk, the Soviet Union extended its moratorium to the end of the year, and the House subsequently voted by a large majority to cut off funding for tests above one kiloton, so long as the Soviets did not test. Good prospects of winning Senate agreement, in the conference, to a modified cutoff, perhaps with a 5-10 kiloton threshold, were abandoned when the Iceland negotiations were announced. So failure to get a Congressional testing cut-off in 1986 was, or may well have been, a cost of the Soviet decision to seek an Iceland summit: a result that obscured the great effectiveness of the Soviet extensions of their moratorium.] Now, in mid-March, 1987, it appears that very good prospects exist -- enhanced by Irangate -- of getting a Congressional cut-off by the fall of 1987 as an amendment to an appropriations bill that the President will find difficult to veto.]

The point of my talk today is that's not enough. I offer to you an approach to be reflected on, a proposal to change the whole negotiating stance, the whole arms control stance, toward the Congress, the public, and the world. Away from the American game of numbers: which furthers instability, which permits the MX and D-5, permits the SS-24, permits the SS-18. Notice, by the way, that for all that Reagan has denounced the SS-18, he has never once made a proposal that would require the Soviets to remove all the SS-18s. Hasn't anybody over here thought that was a little odd? He has never said, "We propose you get rid of the SS-18, and we will do this or that." He's proposed numerical limits that imply reducing SS-18s, but not eliminating it. I have an explanation to



that. Maybe I'm wrong, but at least it answers the question.

Both to justify the MX and D5, and to threaten crisis instability, I think he wants the SS-18 to exist. He needs it to exist. But you don't need it, and we don't need it, the world does not need it. To say that is to say that the SS-24, with its ten warheads, and the SS-18, are indeed available as bargaining chips in a negotiation with the world and with Congress, ones that you can afford to give up in bargaining. You can afford, because you should never have produced them. It was a mistake. And that means that you can afford to get rid of them, and get something in return.

What should you want in return? Basically, a world which is stable, whether it has parity or not. For political reasons, parity, of course, is desirable, in numbers and in every respect. It's not essential, but it's desirable. It's not harmful, in itself, but I keep saying, "It's not enough." The criterion is a stable world in which neither side threatens the offensive forces, the retaliatory forces of the other, and above all, in which it is not the case that both sides do it. That can be achieved.

Gore's proposal for de-MIRVing, in fact, does do it. In fact, if we destroyed existing MIRVed missiles--whether or not we replaced our single warhead missiles by new single warhead missiles, like the SS-25, or the Midgetman--we would have a world of parity, by coincidence. If we got rid of the Minuteman III, you got rid of your MIRVed missiles, oddly enough we would be left with about equal forces of existing single warhead missiles. But even if those are replaced with new mobile ones, that's still stabilizing; and it would have strong support in Congress.

So, I'm saying, that conceptually, at least, in a very straight forward way, the Soviets can remove their threat to the U.S. land-based forces, which not only spurs the arms race, but which makes the world dangerous in a crisis, and which plays into the U.S. hands by making U.S. threats credible in a crisis. The Soviets can propose a ban, and immediate moratorium, on the testing or deployment of new MIRVed missiles--which would bar the SS-24, the MX, the Trident II, and Soviet counterparts--and mutual elimination of existing ones. Moreover, the Soviets can take unilateral initiatives such as an immediate moratorium on the deployment of SS-24's, which are ready for deployment.

The very focus of the Administration on the SS-24 with its ten warheads, and the SS-18, makes those powerful bargaining tools. It would be very dramatic to say, "You have the MX ready to deploy, we have the SS-24 ready to deploy. We propose deploying neither. Nor the Trident II, nor a Soviet counterpart. We propose a ban on new MIRVed missiles, and moreover, the prompt elimination of existing, accurate MIRV missiles." And, an initiative which took the form of stopping, in a moratorium, the deployment of the SS-24, would be highly dramatic.

I conclude by facing the question, "Would not such a move be



a radical change for a great power to do?" Yes, but not more than the initiative to stop the testing of nuclear weapons. Four years ago, in June, 1982 I spoke to Soviet officials, proposing a moratorium on warhead testing, and got interest, but a very skeptical attitude as to whether the Soviet Union could or should bring itself to do such a move unilaterally. Well, the Soviets have done it. It was possible. I think that means that it's possible for the world to remove itself from this trap. The U.S. led us in, the Soviets followed, and the Soviets can lead us out.

I am not saying it is easy. Don't think that I imagine that anything I've said here is some magic formula that quickly dissolves the enmity, the dangers, the risks that are involved. I am not that stupid. I, too, could list ten different obstacles, fifteen obstacles, to achieving any of these purposes. I am not saying that humans can undo easily and quickly what humans have done to create this problem. But humans can, occasionally, achieve things that are not easy, or simple.

I think we have a chance to prevent the world of "Notes From a Dead Man." And, therefore, we must try. If my proposals seem radical, as they are, we must reflect that as Marx said, "To be radical is to go to the root of things, and the root is man." (I could even say "man" more than "women," in this context.) And what men have done can be undone, by men and women together.

Surely it is hard to stop the deployment of the SS-24. Surely it is hard to stop the deployment of the MX or the Trident II. People tell me in Congress it's impossible. I say, to Congresspersons, "Not with Soviet help, impossible." And in any case, do we have a right to regard as impossible, stopping the deployment of forces that, after all, do not yet exist? They aren't yet deployed. Do we have the right to give up before they're actually in position? The truth is, we do not have the right to give up on saving our children, and our children's children, so long as we live, so long as those forces have not been fired. It is possible, therefore we must try. Thank you.